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SIPDIS

USTDA FOR NATHAN YOUNGE

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TAGS: [ENRG](#) [EINV](#) [PREL](#) [XL](#)  
SUBJECT: ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SSI SPEAKER FOSTERS DEBATE IN  
EASTERN CARIBBEAN

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Summary  
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¶1. (U) The Strategic Speaker Initiative brought solar power expert JF Scarborough to Barbados, Grenada and Dominica to talk about alternative energy. This timely topic attracted surprisingly large crowds and fostered vigorous debate within the countries on the best way to manage future alternative energy projects. The speaker stressed that, while reducing reliance on foreign fuels and reducing carbon emissions are important, local job creation is the top priority for many countries looking at alternative energy projects. Local ownership of any project is critical to ensure its sustainability, especially in the face of both fluctuations in the price of oil and the premium that the public, the government, and the vulnerable island tourism sectors place on climate change impacts.

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Barbados  
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¶2. (SBU) Scarborough had productive meetings with the Ministry of Energy and a private alternative energy engineering firm, and participated in a radio talk show program before delivering a formal lecture at the University of West Indies (UWI) Cave Hill Campus. The lecture, which was held in partnership with UWI contacts, drew an audience of 55 people from the professional engineering community, the government, the Barbados Light and Power Company (BLPC) and the university community. Scarborough also appeared on Barbados' leading morning talk radio show, "Brass Tacks." Responding to a caller who asked why the USG is pushing alternative energy when the USG has been neglecting alternative energy development and is behind the rest of the world in applying the technology, Scarborough acknowledged that the Federal Government is newly engaged in the issue, but pointed out that on the State level, the U.S. is leading the world in adopting new energy technologies.

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Grenada  
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¶3. (U) Scarborough met with officials from the Energy Office in the Ministry of Finance, exchanging information on what Grenada is seeking to do with regard to both energy conservation and in identifying appropriate forms of alternative energy. Grenada is only just starting to look at what its energy policy should be and plans to begin public consultations on a draft plan on July 28. On July 9, Scarborough gave his presentation on energy alternatives to an audience made up of around 40 government officials as well as representatives from local contracting companies, electricity companies and non-governmental organizations. He engaged the group in lively debate about site-appropriate types of energy projects Grenada could benefit from. Local

media covered the program. In addition, Scarborough and representatives from the Energy Office appeared on Grenada Broadcast Network's morning show and were interviewed for later broadcast by the Government Information Service.

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Dominica  
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14. (U) In Dominica the U.S. Embassy partnered with DOMLEC, the majority U.S.-owned electrical utility, in order to portray a realistic view of the opportunities and obstacles facing alternative energy production. On July 11th, Scarborough spoke to an audience of approximately 45 hotel owners, government regulators, Ministry of Energy representatives, and DOMLEC employees. Local critics frequently attack DOMLEC for its lack of alternative energy projects and rapacious tariffs. Scarborough's lecture and Q&A provided a more balanced approach to alternative energy and gave DOMLEC representatives the opportunity to confront their critics and get the message out about future developments and the obstacles confronting them. Scarborough's message of sustainability and local empowerment resonated with the crowd of environmentally friendly hoteliers, who are passionate about promoting the 'Nature Isle' message about Dominica. The entire presentation was recorded by Marpin TV station for later broadcast.

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Comment  
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15. (U) All of the events drew a wide cross section of participants from the government, utilities, universities, and those involved in tourism -- in many cases, some of the largest crowds we have attracted for such programs in the region. This allowed for a spirited discussion on the role of renewable energy in the economy and the best way to move forward, and highlighted the elevated level of interest in alternative energy possibilities throughout the region. Private meetings with Ministries and utilities also promoted a more balanced approach toward development plans. This speaker series added to the expanding chorus of information about alternative energy and thoughtfully injected the ideas of sustainable development and local ownership into the ongoing discussion.  
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